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The school should assume greater responsibility as an agency of society for child welfare. When the child's welfare is threatened by neighborhood circumstances, the school should intervene.

The community should invest more money in existing school facilities to transform the schools into year-round community centers capable of providing a positive organizing force in the neighborhood.

Teachers and administrators should be a part of the community they serve. Emphasis should be placed on friendly interaction between school staff, pupils, and parents. Schools should keep a continual record of neighborhood trends. The school should provide a curriculum designed for the background of both the pupil and his parents. The school building should be a place to which people in the neighborhood may turn for leadership and guidance.

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NEW DIRECTIONS IN SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Dr. Howard McClusky

An Address Delivered to
The Great Cities School
Improvement Workshop,
August 29, 1960
Detroit, Michigan

(Transcript of Tape)

Detroit Public Schools

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NEW DIRECTIONS IN SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS

I really have looked forward to this meeting with you today, and I am going to get very quickly to business. I feel a little like the person who has been arguing for things to happen and then, suddenly, somebody gives you the chance to do, or at least talk practically about some of the things that we have all been advocating. I find myself fluctuating today between a kind of realism and also idealism in a larger perspective. I have been trying to think, in my own mind, how much we should think in terms of reach and to what extent we should think in terms of grasp, and I will try to do a little of both.

I would like to say now, and I will probably make a little more of it as I conclude, that I cannot help but feel that we are today, in this project and projects like it, literally creating a kind of new pattern of solutions of some of the problems that have suddenly come upon us as a result of this new style of metropolitan living. Maybe we are, in ways that we do not realize, somewhat like agricultural extension was at the beginning of its work about 50 years ago, when it started a completely new service to meet a completely new kind of situation. So, I have a real interest in being here today as I am sharing this workshop experience with you. Frankly, I look forward to standing close by, if I may, and getting the reaction that you folks will make as you try to apply all of these ideas to the work ahead.

I would like to start out with several propositions or assumptions and remind myself, at least, why we are here; why are we interested in this. This is not quite back to the medieval or aristocratical, but it is half-way back. We are, first of all, talking about the dignity of the individual and what education can do to bring about equal chance. In talking this way, we are assuming that the circumstances of life has not produced these qualities for a considerable number of our citizens. How can we free him from crippling limitations which crush him so that he has practically no life space left in which to maneuver? We are here talking because society cannot afford the pathologies (the personal and the social pathologies), the sicknesses that result, crime, desertion, and all the illness and break down, etc. This is a terrific burden on everyone. Sociologists, especially persons who are specialists in pathology of social and particularly urban break down, know how terrible these are. We all know how these statistics in a relatively small area of a community can be out of all proportion to the people there.

In fact, up north the other day, in thinking about what would be most appropriate and looking over a copy of the Free Press that happened to somehow get into our cabin, I noticed the new suggestion that part of this area right close to us--right across from Wayne--be taken over by Wayne for an expansion. I was very much interested in the quote of Charlie Blessing that if that were done there would be about $450,000 more income to the city than there is at the present time. Even that use, some of which would be tax free, would represent more wealth to the city than the present income and the present costs represent. We cannot afford the pathology. We need the resources of the people. We need to upgrade the potentiality and get the full measure of their contribution and gifts to society which are now

blocked because of the nature of their conflicted and impoverished living. I wish I had heard Dr. Kirk's talk yesterday and also Dr. Havighurst's. I think we are recognizing now in ways that we did not realize before that there is resource here. I am going to give you two examples of this.

One of the great international leaders of today, I understand, came from a school in one of the poor districts of Detroit. You may know to whom I refer. I understand that one of the recent scientific achievements, from which we have all benefited, is the product of a bright young chap who came up in one of the poor schools in New York City. We do not know when there may be, in places that we least expect, great ability and great genius.

It seems to me, again, that we should remind ourselves that the object of all of this, the object of all education, is to produce the autonomous individual who is capable of fullness of life and to see that his equipment will be increased so that he can make an effective service and contribution to society. We, I think, should keep in mind that while in these circumstances, the individual faces far greater difficulties in achieving autonomy. He will need more encouragement and more assistance to supplement his efforts in order to improve and increase his resourcefulness. Yet, I think we have to be very careful of all people trying to help others. We have to be very careful not to enter into processes of helping which induce the so-called dependency relationship. Our goal should be to make the person autonomous and resourceful and to increase his skills and his resources in order that he could command the life space as he knows it.

I start out with these assumptions, and I would like also to say at this stage that we ought to look upon this not just as an emergency situation. I like to think of this as similar to the situation we encounter in dealing with a retarded child where we accent things that we know are good for children of all levels of ability. I think, as far as I am concerned, the kinds of things that I am going to accent here are just as relevant with proper adaptation for schools in more favored areas as they are here. As far as I am concerned, if by some miracle a lot of these problems that we are now confronting in this Great Cities Project should somehow be solved, what we are talking about here is good education--period. It is good for the community, regardless of the circumstances, and while there is kind of an emergency urgency about this problem, an urgency that grows out of a critical situation, as far as I am concerned, we are talking about good practice in any circumstances.

To teach--even in the most traditional sense, if we think of our job as exclusively that which goes on in the classroom during the scheduled part of the day--only as we know the pupil as far as possible in the non-school context, are we likely to do a much better job of in-school teaching. This is familiar doctrine to you all, but the exigencies of our modern life tend to help us to overcome it. The perpetual pressure for specialization and for separation of the work of the school from the work of the world outside, is such as to violate this. What I am arguing here is that even in the most ordinary sense, knowledge of the non-school is going to help traditional teaching. The non-school provides what we in psychological terms call the

apperceptive material, the mass of material to which the school material is related. The non-school may or may not prejudice the schools goals in expectation. The non-school may or may not supplement, by direct assistance, provision of teaching materials in the instruction in the school. Another assumption I am making here is that to know the non-school will contribute vitally to the school work.

Another proposition is that the school is a most important agency in society for the welfare of the child. When the welfare of the child is threatened by neighborhood circumstances, the school must stand by to help. Because of the universal presence of the school, leaders like Mr. Blessing will tell you that the elementary school is the nearest thing to a neighborhood focus or center that we now have in modern metropolitan planning. This is due to the fact of the possibility of interaction due to the walking distance between the residence of the child and the school. I call this the law of increasing returns...when society has already made such a great investment, a little extra added to what they already have in personnel, in building, in materials, in audio-visual aides, and facilities of various kinds can multiply the return on the investment many fold. From the standpoint of just sheer economy, a little added on to what we already have will greatly multiply and magnify the service and the use of the facility to the community.

Frank Manley at Flint, and I will refer to Flint once or twice before I conclude, says that this fabulous, and I mean it literally, fabulous school and community program in Flint cost the city of Flint probably 1¢ out of 25¢. After you have spent 25¢ for the regular program of the school, you can add 1¢ in proportion a day per family and get this program in Flint. You have 75 little residential centers where the youngsters come to school, like in little ranch-type homes, practically new elementary schools built for completely year-round-the-clock use. You have a building director for every elementary school in the city. And on and on and on...the tremendous program at Flint represents one cent more after you have already spent 25¢. You might say in passing, that one of the things that appealed to Mr. Mott in helping to support this program and in setting it up as an experiment, was that he felt there was a tremendous waste (as an industrialist) to set up this enormous plant and make it available just from 9 in the morning to 3 or 4 in the afternoon, Monday thru Friday from September to June; and, have this plant there wasting, useless, and unused when the need in the immediate community was so tremendous. This is what I call the law of increasing returns. A little more on top of what we have already spent in investment will increase the return tremendously.

Then, again, it provides a kind of positive force in the neighborhood in the midst of disorganization. Therefore, instead of arguing about the importance of the non-school for teaching and the relevance of the school as a positive force in community life--instead of arguing these points, it seems to me that I am going to at least accept these assumptions as true and devote my main comments on ways and means and some analysis of the forces and factors related to ways and means.

I think, first of all, we must be prepared for the great discrep-

ancy that exists between the school and the neighborhood, and especially the under-developed neighborhood. By the way, I like the term "under developed". I think it is less stigmatic. It stigmatizes less and I think it is actually true and it is a positive statement of our faith in the potentiality of the neighborhood. Be prepared for the discrepancy that exists. These are two different worlds. They are worlds apart. The discrepancy between the world of the school and the world outside of the school is great enough even in a fairly well favored community, but it is especially different here. Life is so marginal, the necessity of just keeping from being evicted, and securing food and clothing for the children is so great that very little time and energy is left for a person to project anything beyond the urgency of the immediate present.

So, there is a great discrepancy that exists and I think we ought to be prepared for this, just precisely as the therapist is trying to help the person coming to him for assistance. I never will forget Adolph Meyer at the Fitch Clinic at John Hopkins saying, "We start out with the idea that the world of the patient is a completely different world than the world of their own world, and we spend a good part of the initial stage of assistance in trying to reconstruct the world as it appears to these people. Trying to reconstruct it and trying to see the world through their eyes."

Another thing that we have to allow for (by the way it is easy for us to be unrealistic about this and expect more from teachers than we do any other workers in city life), and that is the distance in what I call the separation between the place we work and the place of our residence. This is one of those things you have to go through to really appreciate it. It just did not dawn on me until I worked with the Citizens Committee here of what this does to our whole style of life. We reside in one place and we work in another. What is your community? What do you regard as your base? I have heard unkind things said about teachers. About how you have to be careful and get out of the way so as not to be trampled on at the door when the bell rings; but it is understandable if you have to go through crowded traffic 5, 10, or 20 miles to some beautiful lake. This does produce a great sense of separation. Teachers are not alone in this.

I was just thinking as I drove in this morning from Ann Arbor that I had never approached the center of the city at this time in the morning. I think anytime that I had come it had been earlier or a little later; and, I was just impressed with this convergence of traffic as you come off the Ford onto the Lodge expressway and see the congestion beginning to creep up. In fact, I was trying to get to that outside lane ever since I entered the city. I did not know whether I was going to get here or not. This, then, is to say that practically all of the people working in downtown Detroit live elsewhere. This is true of metropolitan living and there is no reason for being so hard on teachers about it. All I am saying is that the difficulty arising from the separation of the work place and the location of the residence adds to the social distance. Good friends of mine, who have done beautiful work in these communities and schools in this part of the city, would tell me over and over again, "I just literally have to get out of the place in order to restore my balance."

Now what to do? I would, first of all, do everything possible to promote friendly action between the parents and the teachers. In every conceivable way I would argue for visitation, parent at school and teacher at home. What I am arguing here is the importance of it and the need of it. I think one of the things lacking in modern life is the lack of communication. As Mel Ravitz, and other sociologists know, the sociological approach to modern living is dealing with the little society that each person has. The theme of the recent The Lonely Crowd is precisely this. So much seems to converge on this. One of my clinical psychology friends in a suburban school the other day said that it frightens him that something has happened in modern life to make people want to run away from people. They are scared of people. They want to withdraw from contact and when a contact is in prospect, it is a threat. It is anxiety producing and not a reward.

I would argue the overwhelming concensus of modern theories says that this is what metropolitan life is doing to us, particularly these highly mobile people who are moving around, uprooted from their old places who have no stabilities to which they can adhere. The consensus also says that if you are going to produce community it had got to be psychological in the profound sense, spiritual in the profound sense, if you please. This is the argument for the emphasis upon friendly interaction. I would say that the chances are that if you had a very friendly, adequate school relationship between a considerable number of the staff and a considerable number of the pupils, I would bet all we know about the life space of people in these circumstances, that this is probably the only adult outside of this little tiny neighborhood world that most of these people would have any access to or any contact with. One of the impressive things to me, ladies and gentlemen, about modern life is the way in which the complexity and the overwhelming immensity of modern living thwarts the individual and makes him feel absolutely and abjectly helpless. His world is a very limited world. We could spend a great deal of time on this, in fact, this is heart of the matter if we wanted to dig on this very point. This is why personally on my own thinking I stress the so called interaction approach.

We may want to argue the do-ability of it, but I think the do-ability of it is established. I think the resistance has come from our disinclination because of our anxieties (and in my judgment this is a perfect example of Ted Newcombs' autistic hostility theory) about the prospect of visiting people who we think are different from ourselves. These are circumstances which create anxiety and our reaction is to retreat and to invest around all of this experience all kinds of things that will happen to us. One of the amazing things to me is the almost universal reaction when the proper arrangements have been made and people have visited they come out with almost a glow, excited, due to two things. First, due to the reduction of anxiety. The things, the terrible things, did not happen to them that they expected to happen. Second, very genuine human rewards came as a result of people, two human beings, getting together. A sense of need and the sense of understanding arose.

Now, why do I say that it is do-able? Well, because in the first place the interview people are doing it. Take for example what Harry Sharp is doing in the Detroit area study. They canvass every section of this great city with graduate students trained for the purpose.

I understand that in your Department of Special Education it is one of the requirements that the teacher of the special class must visit the homes of their pupils. One of the most revealing things to me in my work with the Citizens Committee was to work with Kramer, Glenn Chappel, Kline, and some of these folks in the Attendance Department as well as nurses, social workers, and people like this who are doing it all the time. Let's accept its do-ability and let me get along further into my talk. Let us talk about ways and means, in case it is a problem to anybody.

I was very much fascinated with Sara Robinson's story, when I visited her, about the techniques that they use for the teachers to visit in this very neighborhood. All I am saying is it is do-able. It is possible. I think our problem again is ways and means. I think practically every objection a person can raise has been answered in the successful practice of somebody. One of the most fascinating confirmations of this was in a seminar this summer where a colored lady from Florida, a very, very skillful teacher of adults and youngsters, wrote her masters thesis at another institution, on this home visitation. She worked in very poor areas and some of the little techniques were fascinating...how, little by little she worked, not in the usual way but in little subtle cute ways. She finally worked into the life of the people and all she had to do was walk down the center of the district in which she taught and people would flock to see her.

Some of you may shoot at this but I think you could argue for the "teacherage" concept. Remember, I said I am vacillating between reach and grasp...this is on the reach side.

I think you could argue for some facilities for teachers to actually live on the premises or close by. My answer is Father Kern right down the road here, and I am thinking of the Dodge Settlement House, the Franklin, and those that I know the best. I am not arguing that they all should live there but I believe there could be a very good argument made for some certain group, perhaps the younger teacher, to actually live in and identify themselves in terms of residents to increase the interaction or the interaction experience.

Let us look at the interaction in terms of parent-participation in the life of the school. I am thinking of Miss Rioux up here at Tilden telling me of the fantastic job they did developing a PTA there in a relatively short time. One lady was just about to be appointed as the secretary of the meeting and she had come from another section of the country where her schooling was very meager and Miss Rioux discovered that if she had been thrown into that job, either to write or to report, it would have been a traumatic experience. She did find out that the lady was very good at cooking and she was a very neat housekeeper so she was assigned to the hospitality committee and she made some of the cookies and did a very beautiful job of it. This is a good example of what I mean of adapting the usual procedures of school participation to the neighborhood. The school is a community center with the curriculum designed for the background of the pupil and the parent. Now I am talking about reach.

It would be fascinating to try in some of these circumstances to develop materials that would go to the parent by way of the child. I

have in my files a proposition to be submitted to some foundation. It came to me in the last two months. The initial proposition is to prepare curriculum materials designed for this kind of a group and one of my suggestions is going to be that some of this be prepared for the parents themselves. I might say, parenthetically, that what they have recommended there would be good for youngsters in any part of the city.

One thing I think we have to be very careful about, in fact one of the things I ran into here in Detroit, is that if you in one section tend to water down, then the people who live in that section or the people who live outside of that section but have aspirations for people in that section think that you are giving them a watered-down, cut-down sort of education. This attitudinal kind of a problem, it seems to me, presents one of the great difficulties in trying to adapt the curriculum. Now this is going to take some subtlety, but I do think that the curriculum can be and should be adapted with more pictorial vocabulary problems; and, also materials and experiences that call for different kinds of motor activity and social activity. We need a more intimate knowledge of the pupil. If I were to teach in Japan or Timbuktu, or Mexico I am sure that one of the first things I would do is find out everything I could about the life of the people there.

One of the most fascinating term papers I have had recently was by a lady, a nurse now, who told about the child rearing practices in the Appalachians, at least in the part of the Appalachians where she grew up. It is very possible that they have changed in the 20 or 30 years since she was a child, but listen to me, ladies and gentlemen, the style of life that she described there and the style of life that exist around here are just as different and probably more different than they are here in northwest Detroit as they are in Mexico City. I would argue to know as much about the pupil.

I would also know the community itself; the neighborhood itself, in addition to the style of the life.

In our report here to the Citizens Committee, we recommended that every school in a poor or even more privileged neighborhood keep a continual record of the trends in the neighborhood. We recommended that you have for the neighborhood of the school district, precisely the same kind of cumulative record that you have about the child. It ought to be possible in every school that is going to take this challenge seriously. It ought to be possible to go into that school and have as many of the staff as possible, and certainly the administrative staff, as knowledgeable and expert about what goes on in the perimeter and better yet--even the larger area in which the school is located. Just as we are able to say that Johnnie has an IQ of 85, and his verbal IQ is 105, etc., I would argue that there ought to be this continual collection of data to be used for many, many purposes, not only just for sheer knowledge of the neighborhood, but to be made available to the staff in case they want to adapt the curriculum or want to have some conference. Here would be a great key to migration and changing neighborhoods, etc. We should know the key people.

I may be wrong, but I was very much impressed with the great instability and in-flow and out-flow in these areas down here. I remember Herman Browe saying that the Burton School was perhaps the best

barometer of economic circumstances in the city. When the attendance there was high, things were going good, employment was good; and, when the attendance was low, vice-versa. I remember Glenn Longworth, when he was an assistant principal at this very school years ago, said there was about a 50% turnover every two years. In spite of this there are some people that stay put. I would look for the little anchors of stability.

Moving around with Ernie Marshall of the Board of Education in the course of Detroit Citizens Study, I remember him pointing out... here is a fellow who has been in the shoe cobbling business for 65 years (he was just retiring at that time, perfectly fabulous), and he would know probably, in his intuitive way, about the neighborhood. Here is a chap who has been running a service station about 25 years. Here is a lawyer than handles practically all the property problems. He does not live here but he knows about the community. Here is a person that refused to move. They are an old family and they have stuck by. I would look for these little anchors of stability and use them as key persons to the gate to the community.

I would use the building as a center. Build the school for community use. I would use a team approach as Detroit has done so well in previous pioneering. I would try to make the school itself as strong a community as possible. I would like the concept of the school itself as being as strong and powerful a community as possible so that it would be an oasis, a little island of positive forces in a region of disorganization; a place to which the youngster can come and feel at home; a place, a kind of a beacon to all the families in the neighborhood. This represents something positive, something stable, and something we can stick by as a symbol of security. As a matter of fact, as far as I know this may be happening, but if we insist upon being exclusively intramural and not extramural (if we insist upon doing only the job inside the four walls and within the perimeter of the regular schedule) then I would say that one of the big jobs is to make a <u>special effort</u> to have good morale on the staff. Another <u>special effort</u> needs to be made to have a fine sense of welcome to the children; a <u>special effort</u> so that when the parents cross the portals of the school, they would feel welcome. I would do everything I could in the field of institutional analysis to make this a good place, a good sound, positive, radiant, large, and strong community place. A place to which the people in the neighborhood could look and where they would feel welcome.

As I said at the beginning, I am not sure that I have a model for this but I am going to return to the nearest thing to a model--Flint.

I have rattled around in this field for quite a while, both here and elsewhere, and I hear that there are some wonderful things that Schreiber in New York is doing. I hear bits being done in other places, for example, the Board of Fundamental Education in Minneapolis. If any of you have any doubt as to what you can do on a self-help basis for housing in poor areas, you ought to go down and see what the Flanner House has done to rehabilitate some of the worst slums in Minneapolis on a self-help basis. Lovely little 2 or 3 bedroom homes that would sell in suburban Detroit for from $20,000 - $25,000, built for anywhere from $8,000 - $10,000 on a self-help co-operative basis.

I can think of these things as models. I can think of elements of models everywhere, but the nearest model is right close by.

While the Pierce, the Merrow, and some of these schools are in the more well-heeled neighborhoods of Flint, go to the Fairgrove School sometime. Go there sometime and see the little children having breakfast while their mothers go to work. Go and see the mothers coming in with the laundry. Go and talk with some of the bellboys down at the Durrant Hotel and see their eyes light up when they tell you about the Fairgrove School. This is stuff that we have seen. Go there sometime and be a guest. Let them put on a dinner for you. Let them tell you about the courses. If you want to look for a model, it is not very far away. When anybody tells me it cannot be done, I say look at Flint. You might well say, "But they have Mr. Mott's money." But I am quoting Mr. Manley again, "It is still just one cent on top of twenty-five cents."

Now in conclusion, I am sure that we all recognize that this problem is becoming one of our major current problems; that it transcends just the school; that this is a part of a much larger city problem, metropolitan problem, regional problem and national problem.

In reading the Detroit Urban League Report of the work they are doing with the ADC mothers, I was fascinated with this to see where these people came from. It represented what I think we all generally recognize, that some of the national problems of this dislocation of population and the fact that people are being rejected in other parts of the country, are being at least temporarily pushed to one side by migration to our great northern cities. Let us not fool ourselves, this is a part of a larger problem. This does not mean that it makes it less important because symptom is frequently the way by which the patient learns to look at himself in a realistic way. Most of us will not consider a look at ourselves in a preventive medicine way until we get some little pang or some little hurt of some kind. So this is symptomological approach to some of the deeper problems of modern society.

I would argue that the school people should do everything they can to team up with other agencies to do research on the problem of in-migration. I happen to be on the advisory committee on the University of Michigan group working with Walter Bloucher's Metropolitan Research and I cite this as a sample, that we ought to draw upon every resource we have to get light upon the problem that we inherit in our schools.

Let us assume that this workshop was repeated. It seems to me there ought to be some real hard economic and sociological data about the condition itself. Why do you have the piling up of people? Why do the people come? How do they move on in? Where do they stop first? How long do they stay? What kind of crowding do they get? What kind of mixtures do you get? We need to be as knowledgeable as possible about the larger problem both in metropolitan Detroit and other cities as all over the country. In other words, we are having to alleviate some of the problems of the South by being the host to some of the folks that are not properly integrated there and we need the larger look.

Finally, I have hope in this field when I use agricultural extension as a prototype. This is one of the most fantastic examples of adult education in recorded history. Here is a combination of research at the experiment station with specialists in all of the phases of agricultural production and the follow-up in every county. In addition, there are the county agent for the farm, an agent for the women in home management, and, an agent for older boys and girls. When you think what this has done to the agricultural economy in this country in the past fifty years and the relatively small amount of money that it has involved, don't anyone tell me that we have anywhere near exhausted our resources in this field.

As one of the heads of one of the great foundations told me not more than two months ago, one of the great challenges facing this country today is the transfer to the solution of urban problems, that is, the transfer of the know-how in the same sense of reality and the same sense of achievement that we have already demonstrated in the field of agriculture. It interest me no end that one of the most exploitable things that this country is doing at the present time is everywhere all over the world helping so-called under-developed areas. This is growing by leaps and bounds and here we are exploiting our know-how all over the world to helping people in under-developed and under-privileged areas to help themselves and here we have a problem right in our backyard. Don't anyone tell me that this is not solvable. It is solvable, in my judgment, and we have just begun to nibble at the periphery. This is one reason why, basically, I have great hope and this is one reason why, in my judgment, this is a very fascinating thing that you are doing here. I am delighted to have had a chance to be with you.